Dietitians Australia

Dietitians and action on national nutrition policy critical to managing diabetes in Australia

Equitable access to accredited practising dietitians and escalating the development of the new National Nutrition Policy must be prioritised to support those at risk of or living with diabetes, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into Diabetes in Australia has heard.

Dietitians Australia President Tara Diversi and Acting Chief Executive Officer Natalie Stapleton gave evidence at the Inquiry this month, highlighting the critical role accredited practising dietitians in corporate nutrition and across the health sector, including private practice and public health play in supporting Australians with the prevention, treatment, and management of the illness.

“Unhealthy eating patterns account for roughly 26 per cent of the burden of type 2 diabetes in this country,” Dietitians Australia Acting CEO Natalie Stapleton said.

“Accredited practising dietitians are best placed to support Australians to adjust their dietary intake to include more foods like fruit and vegetables and less discretionary foods high in sugar, salt and fat.”

“The evidence shows Australians at risk of, or recently diagnosed with diabetes, should have access to a minimum of seven Medicare subsidised appointments with accredited practising dietitians to achieve positive health outcomes,” Dietitians Australia President Tara Diversi said.

“We also told the Inquiry the Government must find more options to support communities of high need, for example, through providing block-funded access to dietitians in community health, primary health or urgent care centres and bringing in increased consultation times,” Ms Diversi said.

“In a world of misinformation and disinformation, the power doesn’t belong to people who have the knowledge or who can source knowledge; the power belongs to people who can help you critically evaluate that knowledge for you.

“When it comes to making sense of diet and nutrition information and making behavioural changes to adjust food intake for the prevention, treatment and management of diabetes, accredited practising dietitians are the people who have the power to support Australians,” Ms Diversi said.

Dietitians Australia also urged the Committee to address food systems challenges directly through the escalation of the development of a new National Nutrition Policy.

“Our current food system is a significant barrier for Australians when it comes to maintaining healthy and sustainable eating patterns,” Ms Stapleton said.

“We live in an environment where unhealthy food is readily available, accessible, and highly marketed.

“We need a coordinated and comprehensive approach to nutrition policy in this country that is well-resourced, backed by evidence and uses a range of policy levers to address food system issues and promote the uptake of healthier diets among Australians.

For more information, read Dietitians Australia’s complete submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into Diabetes.

For media enquiries contact Amy Phillips Media Manager on 0409 661 920

Note to Editors: Dietitians Australia is the leading voice in nutrition and dietetics, representing dietitians nationally and advocating for healthier communities. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia.